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given opportunity for individual expression. It is not enough that the pupils absorb; they must react to stimuli, and their reaction ought to be made as spontaneous as possible.

Only so can there be real learning, only so can there be a real educative process going on. It is the nature of pupils to utilize what becomes a part of them and what springs from within as a part of them. Even more: only when there is activity from within, only when the individual is "set," only when mind and body are in a receptive attitude, can there be really economical learning. There may be, there will be, much pouring in, perhaps considerable absorption, even, but there can be little of re-casting, re-organizing, re-acting.

Nor is it necessary that the teacher put off this securing of initiative, this self-expression, to the close or toward the end of the recitation. Pupils must be self-active from start to finish, they must be constantly reacting to the entire range of stimuli presented during recitation. It is this which makes the "live-recitation," the "wide-awake class." Every pupil is a part of the day's work, every step in the process of development, every illustration of the truth, every comparison or generalization becomes the individual property of every pupil who thus is self-active.

But when the topic has been rounded out and completed, when the class has seen the parts in the whole and has made the whole from the parts, then for the purpose of further clarifying the knowledge and of gathering the fragments into a workable unit it is well to try to secure some concrete illustration of the topic from every individual pupil. In some way, if possible, the motor, as well as the visual and auditory senses should be enlisted to help fix once for all the little piece of truth imparted, to make concrete what exists more or less vaguely in consciousness.

This is the chance for dramatization in reading, in geography, in history, in literature. Here the science teacher may relate theory and practice. In the doing of this, drawing may be correlated with many of the school subjects. English composition may grow out of scientific descriptions or historical narrative. The field for such initiative is limitless, and the strange part of it is that so many teachers are blind to the opportunities. On every side, in school and out, the teacher of worth and merit is discovering new chances for securing initiative on the part of pupils.

The teacher of "Black Beauty" has the pupils bring pictures of horses they think resemble the famous idol of school children. The Latin teacher has Cæsar's bridge constructed in miniature, a Roman toga

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## ENGLISH TEACHERS' COLUMN

[The purpose of this column is to afford the teachers of the University and of the schools an opportunity to exchange information and opinion. Questions, to be answered by the Freshman English staff, should be addressed to N. W. Walker, Chapel Hill, N. C.]

### RELATION OF COMPOSITION AND LITERATURE

WHERE should the composition work be placed in the high school course? Sometimes it is placed nowhere—the poorest possible answer. Often it is placed in the first two years exclusively—not a good answer, surely. The best answer is: everywhere. From the time that a student begins to write under a teacher's direction he should continue doing so till he receives his A. B. at college. This is not the radical suggestion that it appears to be. In the high school it need mean nothing more than that Composition and Literature should never be totally separated. The value of training in Composition is greatly enhanced when accompanied by training in thoughtful reading, and the value of training in Literature is greatly enhanced when accompanied by training in writing definitely about literature. For example, take the case of Franklin's *Autobiography*. The main object in the literary study of this book is, of course, to determine precisely what kind of man our "first American" was and what his view of life is worth to us today. It would be a pity, from the point of view of both Composition and Literature, if the chance were lost to write a theme or two proving that Franklin had this or that trait, or showing that a certain trait of Franklin's is prominent in the ordinary modern American, or comparing him with a relative or acquaintance of the writer's, or narrating an incident in the writer's life suggested by an incident in the *Autobiography*. Provided that the topic is fresh and personal, such a theme will not only afford practice in writing but will also vitalize the study of literature. Expression involves impression.—N. F.

### WRITTEN TESTS AS THEMES

IT is certainly most desirable that a student should express his ideas in the most effective and correct manner possible in whatever he writes, whether it be a set theme or a written test on some literary classic. Slipshod writing on examination is sure to engender slipshod writing in theme work. The habit of careful writing is an end to be attained in any English teaching. Moreover, when the pupil is careful in writing all English papers, it is much more likely that he will give attention to problems of composition in history tests or science reports. Indeed, the English

teacher may with great profit occasionally examine such papers from the other departments of the school, in place of the usual set theme. If John Smith knows that he is to be graded on any piece of writing he produces, from the standpoint of composition, he is almost sure to take more pains with his work.

The use of written tests and examinations as theme material has another advantage: the teacher does not have to read such a large number of papers to achieve the same ends. Nor does the student have to flounder around in quest of a subject. The written test serves a double purpose—it reveals knowledge of subject matter and it indicates the skill of the student in impromptu writing. When the test has been carefully revised and returned to the student, he sees his weaknesses in composition as well as his mistakes in facts. It may be that he has failed to impart what knowledge he did have because of this very inability to express himself; and thus the relation of clear thinking gets valuable emphasis.

Especially is this plan of revision desirable in literature courses, where there is a minimum of emphasis on composition as such. By using all exercises written by the students as tests in composition as well, the teacher never ceases to teach the art of composition. If such written exercises are to be used most effectively as tests of writing, suitable topics or questions must be provided. Frequently a written test of a half hour or an hour may be devoted to a single topic. Topics involving comparisons, of character or situation, summaries of plot, character analyses, and occasional critical estimates suggest themselves here.

A few such topics are appended:

1. A Comparison of Macbeth and Macduff.
2. Why Burns is a Great Poet (from study of Carlyle's Essay).
3. A Summary (of some chapter in *Ivanhoe*, *Treasure Island*, etc.).
4. An Interpretation (of some lyric in Palgrave).
5. A Description of some character (such as Beatrice Esmond).—R. H. T.

#### THE RELATION OF PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR

PUNCTUATION is too often regarded as a distinct and isolated field of study in no way related to the fields of grammar and syntax. As a result of this lack of co-ordination many of the apparent errors in punctuation are approached from the wrong angle. Often these errors should be treated as errors in grammar or in syntax, not as errors in punctuation. Two illustrations of so-called faults in punctuation will make this statement clear.

1. The Punctuation of Preceding Dependent Clauses. The student of average intelligence has no difficulty in remembering the very simple rule that a dependent clause preceding the main clause of a sentence should be set off by a comma. Yet in such a sentence as

When water is cooled below a certain point, contraction ceases and expansion begins.

the comma is often omitted. Although the student can glibly repeat the rule he has violated, he nevertheless goes right on violating it. The heart of his difficulty is that he is unable to recognize a dependent clause when he sees one. This weakness, therefore, is a matter, not of punctuation, but of grammar, and its remedy lies in a knowledge of the distinction between dependent and independent clauses. This distinction the student is supposed to know before he begins his serious study of composition, but the truth is that he is often woefully ignorant of grammar. He may to great advantage review his grammar through his study of the punctuation of such a sentence as the one above.

2. The Writing of Parts of Sentences as Complete Sentences. The merest beginner knows that a sentence begins with a capital letter and is followed by a period (question mark, or exclamation point). End punctuation, then, should give no trouble. Yet such so-called sentences as

His outburst cleared the air like thunder. *Leaving the atmosphere clear and calm.*

When I saw him last, he said that he would come. *Though his desire was obviously lukewarm.*

He was a good tennis player. *While his brother was captain of the baseball team.*

occur repeatedly in student themes. These errors are due fundamentally to an ignorance of grammar. In the first sentence the error is traceable to a confusion of verbals and verbs, a matter which is entirely grammatical. Likewise, in the second and third sentences the errors are to be attributed to a hazy knowledge of the grammatical distinction between subordinating and co-ordinating conjunctions. When the student once learns that *though* is entirely different from *however* or *but*, and *while* from *and* or *but*, he will be much less likely to write a dependent sentence element as a complete sentence.

These two cases are illustrative of a large group of errors in punctuation (non-restrictive and restrictive modifiers, the use of a comma before the conjunction *for* to distinguish it from the *preposition* *for*, the punctuation of vocatives, the use of a semicolon before the conjunctive adverbs, etc., etc.), which are really matters, not of punctuation, but of grammar and syntax.—J. M. S., JR.